Practice in Literary Studies: Reading Methods
Reading and Discussion Schedule
English 300.002
Fall 2015
Thurs 2:30—5:25
RZR 304

TEXTS:

1) Hamlet, (Norton Critical), edited by Robert S. Miola, ISBN: 978-0-393-92958-4

2) Shane, Jack Schaefer (Critical edition, James C. Work ed.), ISBN: 9780803291423

3) The Big Sleep, R. Chandler, ISBN: 978-1612428185

4) The Year's Work in Lebowski Studies, (ed.) Comentale and Jaffe, ISBN: 978-0-253-22136-0

Goals:

Our goal in this class is to develop analytical and expressive skills by closely reading and discussing a play, two novels, and five films as well as critical articles on most of these works. Our discussions will form around three genres: "tragedy," the American "western," and the "detective mystery." In each we will discuss literary and cultural/historical ideas of the tragic/modern hero, plot, the representation of "masculinity" and "femininity," and adaptation (prose to film), although we need not be limited by those topics.

Assignments:

1) Three "Discussion Papers" are required. These may be collections of observations, questions, or short essay-like statements (maximum 2 pages) on current discussion topics, readings or viewings.
2) Three ESSAYS are required. Topics TBA. The final or 3rd essay (slightly longer than 1 and 2) will be briefly presented to the seminar at the last class meeting.

Discussion Schedule:

Aug. 27: First Day: Introduction to the course and discussion of tragedy (the legacy of Aristotle).

Sep. 3: Read Miola's "Introduction" (Norton Critical edition) and Hamlet, Act I (entrance of the "tragic hero")

Discussion Paper #1 Due (How does Shakespeare introduce his hero? What is the "problem" that drives the plot? What do we learn about Hamlet in Act 1?)

10: Hamlet, discuss Acts II through V: complications of the plot and resolution

17: Discussion of Hamlet and view Hamlet (in class)

24: Discussion of Hamlet criticism

Criticism of Hamlet, (Norton edition): Samuel Johnson (239-41), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (245-49), Gilbert Murray (255-264), Ernest Jones (264-271), Elaine Showalter (281-298) and Tony Howard (328-339). Additional material may be added.

Oct. 1: Discussion of Shane (novel) and selected criticism. **ESSAY # 1 DUE** (5-6 pp.)

Criticism of Shane: Ranking, " Clash of Frontiers," Critical Edition, pp. 3-15; Erisman, "Growing up with the American West," pp. 289-99; Work, "Settlement Waves and Coordinate Forces in Shane," pp. 307-18; Cleary, "Jack Schaefer, The Evolution of Pessimism," 319-324; Kael, "Shane: Review," pp.370-1; Schein (trans) "The Olympian Cowboy," pp.405-17; Marsdan, "The Making of Shane: A Story for All Media," 338-53. Additional material may be added.

8: View Shane (in class) + discussion

15: Discussion of Shane (the "western" film and novel)

Discussion Paper #2 Due: (What important differences do you note in the film and novel? How are traditional "western" images/themes, like "family," "frontier," "civilization," "land," "nation," and "national identity," treated in the novel and film?)

22: View High Noon (in class) + discussion

27: Discussion of The Big Sleep (novel). **ESSAY #2 DUE** (5-6 pp.)

Nov. 5: View The Big Sleep (in class) + discussion

12: View The Big Lebowski

Criricism of Lebowki: Raczkowski, "Metonymic Hats and Metaphorical Tumbleweeds: Noir Literary Aesthetics in Miller's Crossing and The Big Lebowski, The Year's Work in Lebowski Studies, p. 98, Smithee, "What Condition the Postmodern Condition is In: Collecting Culture in The Big Lebowski, Lebowski Studies, p. 255, Jones, "No Literal Connection: Mass Commodification, U.S. Miltarism, and the Oil Industry in The Big Lebowski," Lebowski Studies, p. 203.

19: Discussion of The Big Lebowski and assigned criticism

Discussion Paper #3 Due: (How does the postmodern perspective of Lebowski alter the basic concept of plot, character (the "hero"), and theme typical of the "western" or "noir detective" film and novel?)

26: Thanksgiving Recess

Dec. 3: **Presentations of theses or specific issues from Final Papers**

4: Last Day of Fall Classes: **FINAL PAPERS DUE** (6-8 pp.)

Contact information:

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Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class, by email, or during posted office hours. Additionally, students need to contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.